

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only

received JUL 19 1983  
date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

**1. Name**

historic Bethel Springs Presbyterian Church

and/or common same

**2. Location**

street & number 3rd Third Avenue N/A — not for publication

city, town Bethel Springs N/A — vicinity of

state Tennessee code 047 county McNairy code 109

**3. Classification**

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name Bethel Springs Presbyterian Church U.S.

street & number P.O. Box 57

city, town Bethel Springs N/A — vicinity of state Tennessee 38315

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Register of Deeds

street & number McNairy County Courthouse

city, town Selmer state Tennessee 38375

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title N/A has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date N/A N/A  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records N/A

city, town N/A state N/A

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## 7. Description

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**Condition** excellent good fair deteriorated ruins unexposed**Check one** unaltered altered**Check one** original site moved

date \_\_\_\_\_

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**Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance**

Constructed in 1893, the Bethel Springs Presbyterian Church is a one-story clapboard, vernacular building located in the town of Bethel Springs, Tennessee (pop. 781), in rural McNairy County about four miles north of the county seat of Selmer. Measuring approximately thirty by fifty feet, the church is six bays long and three bays wide. The gabled and hip-roofed building is distinguished by a c.1910 recessed entrance with a gabled, tetrastyle portico and pointed-arch window and by a steeple with a pyramidal roof. The church is picturesquely situated on a slight rise next to the old public cemetery of Bethel Springs.

The McNairy County location of the church is in the southern section of West Tennessee along the Mississippi state line. Facing north the building is set on a low hill without formal landscaping and adjacent to the Bethel Springs public cemetery, which contains some of the earliest graves in McNairy County.

The building is roughly rectangular in plan with the northwest and northeast bays slightly projecting. The church is covered in narrow clapboards and has an asphalt shingle roof. The east and west facades contain their original four over four windows with flat arches, and the south facade is windowless. Added around 1910, the front (north) facade features a Colonial Revival portico with four slender columns supporting a steep pediment with a pointed-arch window. The short steeple above the portico has a square base and pyramidal roof. The building rests on a high basement, part of which has metal casement windows dating from the 1950's.

Although the interior walls are now paneled, the sanctuary retains its original simplicity. The wooden pews are arranged with a central aisle and face a two-stepped dais with a lectern. The c.1910 front section of the building contains two simple rooms.

## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

**Specific dates** 1893, ca . 1910      **Builder/Architect** unknown

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Bethel Springs Presbyterian Church is being nominated under National Register criterion C for its local architectural significance to McNairy County as an outstanding example of a rural Colonial Revival church. The exterior of the building shows a high degree of craftsmanship in its skillful transformation of a simple rural church into a sophisticated design. The structure is the oldest religious building in McNairy County and has the oldest congregation.

The congregation was organized in 1828 as the Bethel Presbyterian Church, only four years after the formation of the county. The first church building was a 25' x 40' log structure which stood across from the present church in the middle of the adjoining cemetery. A community soon grew up in the immediate area and assumed the name of the church, Bethel. As the community grew into a town, it added the word "springs" to its name for the several natural springs in the vicinity. Although the size of the congregation has fluctuated over the last 155 years, the church has persistently remained important in the social, cultural, and spiritual life of the community.

The building illustrates the alteration of a simple vernacular church into a skillful rural interpretation of the Colonial Revival style popular in America from 1880 to 1920. The church's 1910 addition respects the aesthetic qualities of the earlier 1893 section, its simplicity of form and proportion and its clear expression of material and function. The addition consists of a recessed entrance with a gabled, tetrastyle portico flanked by two simple rooms and surmounted by a steeple with a pyramidal roof.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Dickson, R.M. History of Bethel Springs Presbyterian Church.  
n.p., n.d.

Wright, Marcus J. "Reminiscences of the Early Settlements and Early Settlers of McNairy County, Tennessee," West Tennessee Historical Society Papers, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1947.

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Purdy, Tn.

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UTM References

A 

1	6	3	5	3	7	6	0	3	8	9	9	8	1	0
Zone		Easting						Northing						

B 

Zone		Easting						Northing						

C 

Zone		Easting						Northing						

D 

Zone		Easting						Northing						

E 

Zone		Easting						Northing						

F 

Zone		Easting						Northing						

G 

Zone		Easting						Northing						

H 

Zone		Easting						Northing						

### Verbal boundary description and justification

See Continuation Sheet.

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Lloyd Ostby, Coordinator of Field Services

Rev. Louis J. Narowitz

organization Tennessee Historical Commission

Bethel Springs Presbyterian Church

date February 1983

street & number 701 Broadway  
P.O. Box 57

telephone 615-742-6723

city or town Nashville

Tennessee 37203

Bethel Springs,

state Tennessee 38315

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer signature Herbert L. Haysen

title Executive Director, Tennessee Historical Commission

date 7/12/83

### For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Entered in the  
National Register

date 8/18/83

for Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior  
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Bethel Springs  
Continuation sheet Presbyterian Church

Item number 10

Page 1

Verbal boundary description and justification.

The roughly triangular site of the church is bounded on the north by a gravel drive, the west by Third Avenue, and the east by Fourth Avenue. The property includes only the land immediately surrounding the church. The cemetery, which is owned by the town of Bethel Springs, is not included in the nomination.



BETHEL SPRINGS  
McNAIRY CO. TENN.

SCALE: 1" = 100'  
DATE OF FLYING: MAY 1966

DISTRICT: 2

MAP N<sup>o</sup>  
60-G

Bethel Springs Presbyterian Church  
Third Avenue  
Bethel Springs, McNairy Co., Tennessee

Tax Map 1" = 100'

